

## Battling the Blizzard!

**W**E DECIDED TO SURPRISE a young grandson yesterday. We decided to turn up unannounced and watch him play rugby. We decided to drive all the way to Thames (on the Coromandel Coast), park near the playing fields, sneak onto the sideline, and wait for him to spot us. But we didn't allow for the weather ...

This wasn't the first time I've watched a game in less-than-ideal conditions. In fact, I hold the record in our family for standing in pouring rain, clomping around in leaky gumboots, and frantically urging 'our team' to beat the pants off the other team.

But this is the first time I've done it in an arctic gale.

I heard later on the News that we'd been hit by the "World's Biggest Storm" – stretching all the way from Antarctica and the Southern Ocean, and centred (I'm convinced) on Thames. It was bucketing down before we even got there, with icy sleet trying to smash our windscreen and angry low clouds trying to swallow our car. And, when we ventured out onto the paddock, we were met (I kid you not) by Force-10 winds and horizontal rain!

My wife lasted less than five minutes. She scuttled back under shelter with two granddaughters and one wrecked umbrella. But not me! My grandson was



JUST A FEW CANS OF ALPHABET SOUP – HAD THE BIGGEST VOWEL MOVEMENT EVER!

out there, battling the blizzard, and I couldn't abandon him, could I?

Kids seem to like having grandfathers at their games, eh. And the look on this boy's face when he first saw me – and heard me – made it all worthwhile. He stopped shivering and came alive, running and tackling and rucking and scrambling with twice the enthusiasm. And he even managed to score a try!

We survived the "World's Biggest Storm", my grandson and I. And we stuck it out together 'til the final whistle blew. He came away with a pat on the back for having played well – and I came away with sodden jeans, muddy shoes, a runny nose, and some great memories.

Fun? You betcha! I wouldn't have missed it for anything ... ❁

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JOHN (GRAPEVINE'S FOUNDER) RECKONS THE PROBLEM WITH WINTER SPORTS IS THAT THEY MOSTLY TAKE PLACE IN WINTER. "YOU'D GET MORE GRANDPARENTS OUT," HE CLAIMS, "IF WINTER SPORTS WERE PLAYED IN SUMMER."

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